

Curry Arts



Journal

2000

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Cover Design by Erin Driscoll

In a Dining Room Prison

Scene: A dining room and a jail cell. The scene is set in two parts simultaneously. One half is a small jail cell, and the other half is a dining room. When action is in dining room, the light will be dimmer in the jail cell and vice versa. There should only be one full blackout. Lighting changes should be done with a slow cross-fade. Light in the dining room should be fairly bright; in the jail cell, dimmer and gloomier. The dining room has a table and four chairs; one that looks barely sat in. The jail cell has a block to sit on. In the dining room set, the characters wear signs with their names on them. The parents are played without personalities. The scene should always be frozen until the GIRL is part of it. The parents should be in dark or drab clothes, except when Sherri is alive. Both girls should be pretty, but in different ways. Sheri should be glamorous and wear clothes that show off her healthy figure. GIRL should wear normal clothes, but not at all sexy.

GIRL should be about 18-21. The GIRL should be the only character played with personality and emotion. She should not be seen as insane in any way. The audience should empathize with her.

MOTHER: about 48. The MOTHER should be played without emotion. Her tone, however, should always be cheery, even when she is scolding.

FATHER: about 48 with his face always in a newspaper. He should have a personality kind of like Ben Stein without the humor. He always agrees with whatever the MOTHER says.

SHERI: although the older sister, she should also be about 18. All of her scenes take place in the past, as this is a retrospective play. She should be passionate and full of life, the all-American girl that everyone loves. She should be beautiful.

Act One

[In a jail cell]

GIRL: Welcome to the story of my life. I guess it is not too interesting, but the story is all mine. I guess for the most part it's normal, but then again, what is normal? I have a family: two parents, a sister, and a dog. Ok, I guess I'll show you what I mean.

[In dining room]

[MOTHER, FATHER and GIRL sitting at table]

FATHER: Pass the butter.

MOTHER: You know butter is bad for your heart!

GIRL: Mother, leave him alone.

[In jail cell]

GIRL: Everyone always said that I looked like my mother. Thank God no one ever said I act like her. She's such a nag!

[Dining Room]

[MOTHER and GIRL standing next to table, FATHER at table reading paper]

MOTHER: I think it would be better if you stayed home tonight.

GIRL: But Mother, I am 18 years old and I would like to have some kind of social life.

FATHER: Let her go out with her friends, dear.

MOTHER: *[in a pleasant tone]* But her friends are no good. All they are is trouble.

FATHER: It's settled, girl, you heard your mother.

[Jail cell]

GIRL: I have a name! It's all right; I snuck out that night anyway. I always did. I just sort of wanted permission, that's all. Mother always was strict. My friends are not trouble!

[Dining room]

[Parents are inside, GIRL is in the hallway; they don't see her]

MOTHER: We've got to do something about that GIRL of ours.

FATHER: Sure, whatever you want dear.

MOTHER: She's doing nothing with her life.

FATHER: Whatever you say.

MOTHER: She's a failure.

[Jail cell]

GIRL: I guess every child at one time or another thinks that their parents think they're a failure, but can you imagine what it feels like to hear it? She didn't know I was listening. She never knew when I listened. Everything she said just added fuel to the fire.

[Dining room]

[GIRL sneaking in through outside door]

[MOTHER getting a drink. It is nighttime. FATHER is in bed]

MOTHER: *[pleasantly]* GIRL, where have you been?

GIRL: *[nervously]* Out with my friends.

MOTHER: *[still pleasant]* Well now look what you've done. You've gone and earned yourself a grounding. One week, young lady.

[Jail cell]

GIRL: She didn't even yell at me. She never did. Always that same tone over and over again. They never yelled. They never had any expression. Ever!

[Dining room]

[FATHER and GIRL are there, his face buried in the paper, as usual]

FATHER: GIRL, get me some coffee.

GIRL: Okay. *[She does]*

FATHER: Nice weather, huh?

GIRL: Do you think my friends are trouble?

FATHER: Nice and warm. It hasn't rained in weeks.

[Jail cell]

GIRL: I never had any kind of relationship with my Father. In a way, that's worse than with my mother; at least we'd fight.

[Same scene, change of beat]

GIRL: Every now and then I think about my sister, Sheri, and how things would have happened if she were still around. How she could have saved me from them. God, why did she have to die?

[Dining room]

SHERI: Shell, what's wrong? You look so bummed out.

GIRL: *[Michelle]* It's them, Sheri. I can't take it anymore. They drive me crazy.

SHERI: Don't let them get to you, Shell. What did they do this time?

GIRL: They never let me go anywhere or do anything. God, they're so strict.

SHERI: I'll let you in on a little secret. You don't have to let them rule you. Sneak out. I always do.

[Jail cell]

GIRL: Sheri always was the only "real" person in the family. You could talk to her; you could really talk to her. And she called you by your

name. I remember the days before she died. Things were so different. *[Pause]* At first I was glad it happened. I didn't have to try to live up to her. But I regret feeling that. I loved my sister; I always will love her.

[Dining room]

[MOTHER, FATHER, and GIRL are at table. Sheri is late for dinner and comes rushing in. This scene is different from the others; the parents have personality and the FATHER'S face is not in the newspaper. The change is because Sheri is alive; they were always this way when she was alive.]

[Sheri rushes in]

MOTHER: Sheri, you are late for dinner. We've missed you. You know we like the whole family to be at dinner.

SHERI: *[excitement in her voice]* I know, I know! I'm sorry I'm late, but I had to stay late at school to see if I got a part in the play, and I got the lead!

MOTHER and FATHER: *[simultaneously]* That's great, dear!

GIRL: *[without much excitement]* Of course, good job Sheri.

[Jail cell]

GIRL: She did everything: plays, yearbook, head cheerleader, and she was so popular. God, I envied her!

Act Two

[Jail Cell]

GIRL: It was more quiet than usual that day. They didn't even react when they caught me sneaking in. And then they said it. And then I snapped.

[Dining room]

[The GIRL is sneaking back in from a night out when she notices her parents in the dining room. She has no choice but to be caught.]

GIRL: *[boldly]* Hi!

MOTHER: *[without batting an eyelash]* Your sister had the decency never to come home this late.

FATHER: And she never snuck out.

[Jail cell]

GIRL: They always compared me to her. Ever since she died. How can I ever compare to someone so perfect? They never let me

forget she was perfect.

[Dining room]

Same Scene

GIRL: *[Yelling]* WHY DO YOU ALWAYS FUCKING COMPARE ME TO HER! IT'S NOT FAIR; I'LL NEVER BE HER!

MOTHER: That's right, you won't be.

FATHER: You can't compare.

GIRL: *[Yelling]* That's it!

[Quickly, in a sort of frenzy, she grabs a butcher knife and stabs her FATHER in the back. It is so quick, her MOTHER has no time to react. Her FATHER dies instantly. Her MOTHER gets up in a panic and rushes to get the knife, but as she runs towards her, the GIRL brings the knife down and the MOTHER is stabbed to death, too.]

[Jail cell] [This is the point of full blackout. Spotlight on GIRL]

GIRL: I don't know what came over me. What fucking came over me? They just shouldn't have said it, that's all. They fucking deserved it. *[Deadpan to the audience]* I'd do it again. *[Pause, indicating a change of beat]* I always felt like I lived in her shadow, Sheri's perfect little shadow. And they never let me forget it. *[To audience]* But you see, she was only perfect in their eyes; they never knew about her little "problem."

[Dining room]

SHERI: *[drunk and stumbling in; parents are asleep. GIRL is studying. SHERI has a backpack full of alcohol]* What're you doing up this late?

GIRL: I'm studying, I have a big test tomorrow! *[at this point SHERI is looking over GIRL'S shoulders, close enough for GIRL to smell her breath]* God, are you drunk again? This is like the third time this week, Sheri.

SHERI: No, I'm not drunk, besides, I didn't drink at all this week.

GIRL: Yes, yes you did. You have a problem, Sheri. You can try to deny it, but it's true.

SHERI: Anyway, I have to go, I just came back to get my coat. *[she grabs it from the rack]*

GIRL: Sheri, who's driving?

SHERI: I am.

GIRL: But you can't. You're in no shape...*[GIRL is in shock and*

doesn't know what to do]

SHERI: Bye! *[SHERI goes out the door. You hear a car door close and the engine start. You hear SHERI pull out of the driveway.]*

GIRL: *[running outside]* Sheri, no! *[You hear the car drive down the street and get hit by another car. (Lighting note: during this scene use two lights that look like headlights, so audience can watch the car drive)]*

[Jail cell]

GIRL: I'll never forget seeing her like that. Lifeless. I guess nobody is really perfect. Sometimes I wonder what Sheri thinks of me. Does she think I was right? Would she have done it too? Is she ashamed of me? I like to think she'd do it, too. I'd like to think that the force that came over me that day was her looking out for me. Telling me what to do. Telling me the right thing to do. *[Change of beat]* I guess I'll never know. I can't bring her back even if I wanted to. And I can't bring them back, not that I want to. And I can't get me back. They saw to that. It's their fault. *[Change of beat]* I wouldn't have done it if I were her.

— Katie Mello

Take A Closer Look

It lives with me,
and I with it
it just won't quit
when I'm happy, it throws a fit
then forms another intricate plan to destroy me . . .
They look within
but they can't see or feel my pain
incapable of sympathy, without empathy
woe, poor pathetic me
my life a catastrophe
timely and untimely tragedy
grabs on to me . . .
My pain too much to size
my face a sheet of ice
coldness grips my insides
pretense on the outside
I must conceal
what I truly feel
for I don't want you to see
what it is doing to me
expression of depression
so many afflictions
me, this mass of imperfection
built up aggression
regression, to whom I was
and only, just because
everything is coming down on me
and I can't deal with it alone, I need somebody,
ANYBODY!
I am a nobody . . .
woe, to poor pitiful me
grief giving countlessly,
daily,
hanging on . . . barely

tormented by those who despise
who think they are wise
has me, I must admit, petrified
they dare to declare
ha! my pain they do not share
yet they think they know me
I lay motionlessly
sometimes comforted by His Majesty
the pain is real and great, so I moan
silently,
I cry when I'm not alone
and when I am, oh gawd, how loud I have groaned
asked Jah and myself why
but, neither of us replies
maybe tomorrow will be a better day . . .
I can only have faith, hope and endlessly I pray.
Charming Spice

– Michelle Nanton

The Pen

He gazes at the pen across the room,
Lying motionless on the mahogany desk.
As it is the pen is as useless as a gun without bullets.
The thin instrument, when embraced, he considers a lifeline.
Without it he can speak no words.
He picks up the weapon.
Now armed, he takes aim.
With his thoughts, so dance the pen in hand, with dexterous rhythm,
Depicting his sweet inanities in blue ink.

– Sean Lynch

for days

as the rain falls gently i think of you,
then again, when do i not.
the rain just makes it easier.
i become lost in the drowning puddles
where leaves find it easy to relax and join the party
while i'm still thinking of an excuse to cross your path.
i can not search for you through mind readings and pictures,
but my imagination is as close as i can be to your lips.
i can always find the image again and again
and replay it over and over
and make it last for minutes,
for hours, or
for days.
i can close my eyes and keep them shut,
but i would miss you that way.
i could hop a train and be gone from your presence,
but i would miss you that way.
plus who has time to see the world?
for me, it would take more than 365 days
to make my way round these watery surfaces
and i would still miss you that way,
for days.

– Rebecca Roberts

Innocent Until Proven Guilty

Invisible tears-
Pounding silence-
-not seen nor heard-
by those unaffected.
Deep scars-
Puncture wounds of the emotions-
-not felt by those who refuse to acknowledge-
Does blindness prevail through ignorance?
My soul pleads its case-
for my heart stands to be punished
-a crime it did not commit.

– Teri Corso

Cloaked in Mystery

Up to me she stalks and stands
Then winds around my feet
Lightly 'top the shelf she lands
Searching for something to eat
Green eyes alight, her gaze on me
She jumps down to the floor
Looking back, she meows at me
Then dashes toward the door
Once outside she stops and stares
Into the pitch dark night
Up to the backyard fence she tears
Then disappears from sight
Later, into my room she comes
And springs upon the bed
Her soothing purr the balm that numbs
The chaos in my head

– Jane M. Yannetti

Cory's Wish

It was a sunny day in April and school was just getting out for the day. Mrs. Butterford's first graders were laughing and giggling while running as fast as they could to get to their buses. You could hear all the chatter from the kids talking about what they were going to do after school. On the bus you could smell the happiness of the kids being free for the rest of the afternoon. On one side of the bus you could hear the girls talking about how they were going to play hopscotch at Stephanie's house.

"Can we jump-rope instead?" asked Jenny.

"No, let's play tag instead," suggested Patty.

"How about if we play both games so it will be fair for everybody?" suggested Stephanie.

"OK" said all the girls.

On the other side of the bus you could hear the boys fighting about what they were planning on doing after school. Billy yelled out, "Let's play baseball in Dimitri's backyard. We have enough for two teams."

"No," screamed Dimitri. "I don't want to play in my yard. Can't we do something else?" he hollered.

While they were deciding, Cory, the quiet soft-spoken kid, heard the conversation and asked if he could join in.

"Hey guys, do you mind if I play too?" he asked happily.

"Um, well we already have enough for two teams," replied Billy. "Sorry."

Cory just turned back around in his seat and sulked the rest of the way home. They always made up excuses for him not to play. He always got left out by those kids.

The bus had two more stops and then it would be empty until the next morning. The last two kids on the bus were Michael and Cory. Cory was feeling a little nervous and his palms were starting to sweat because Michael picked on him as much as he could.

"Hey shrimp," said Michael. "Why would you even bother asking if you could play with us? Do you really think we will say yes?" Cory just sat faced forward and didn't move an inch. "Hey, I'm talking to you," said Michael. Finally, Cory turned around and said very nervously looking at the dirty floor below him, "I just figured I would ask."

"Well, next time you know not to," Michael replied in a mean voice.

Cory's stop came and he walked off the bus and into the house as though he had lost his favorite toy. He was walking very slowly with his

head down, not paying attention to where he was going. Cory walked into the house and went right by his mom and his sister.

"Hi," replied his mom, but Cory didn't answer, he just kept on walking right into his bedroom. Right then and there his mom knew something was wrong with him. She didn't follow him right away; she just left him alone for awhile.

Dinner time came and Cory just sat there and played with his mashed potatoes. His head didn't come up once from the table. Finally, his parents asked what was wrong.

"Cory, did something happen to you at school today?" asked his dad. Cory just sat there and shrugged his shoulders while staring at his plate full of food.

"You know Cory, we can't help you if you don't tell us what happened," replied his mom. "It's OK to tell your mom and dad," she said.

"Did the kids pick on you again at school?" asked his mom.

"Yes!" Cory hollered. "I don't want to talk about it; leave me alone," he screamed while stomping up to his room in tears.

"Mom, what's wrong with Cory?" his little sister Kristen asked.

"Oh nothing, honey. Just finish eating your dinner; it's almost time to get ready for bed," she replied.

After cleaning up, Cory's mom went upstairs to get him ready for bed. She walked in to find him curled up in a ball on his bed. His mom sat down next to him on the edge of the bed.

"Cory, please tell me what happened today," his mom said.

"No, I said I don't want to talk about it. Please leave me alone."

"Cory!" yelled his mother. "Talk to me now or I'm going to ask the teacher myself."

"Fine, I'll tell you," he said. "I'm so sick of getting picked on for no reason," he said as tears fell down his face. "Everyday they pick on me and I wish I could play with them. It hurts my feelings, Mom. Please make them stop," he hollered hysterically.

"Cory, I can't make them stop," she said. "You need to tell them how it's hurting your feelings. Stick up for yourself," she replied. "Did you try telling them that it's making you sad?"

"No, I haven't had the chance to. I just walk away from them."

"Cory, you need to talk to them. Explain to them that you don't like what they're doing to you. Be strong and not afraid."

"But it's not easy, Mom. They barely let me near them," he replied with a frown on his face.

"I understand, but just give it a shot," his mom replied. "Now, I want you to brush your teeth and get into bed, it's getting late."

"OK Mom," said Cory. "Thanks for everything. I love you, Mom," replied Cory while sniffing.

"I love you too, Honey," insisted his mom as she turned off the light and kissed him on his cheek.

The next day Cory went to school thinking about what his mom had talked about the night before. He thought about it up until gym class where Michael, Billy, and Dimitri were all in Cory's class. As soon as Cory walked in the door, it all started.

"Oh, look who it is, if it isn't the little shrimp," yelled Dimitri. Dimitri was just a follower. He never said anything unless Billy or Michael were around.

Mr. Hilltop, the gym teacher, settled them down and told them that they were going to play a game of kickball.

"Now, I want everyone who is wearing a red shirt to get together for team one, and the kids who are wearing any other color to join together for team two," suggested Mr. Hilltop.

"Oh, thank goodness Cory has on a white shirt today," yelled Michael.

"Yeah, now we can actually win the game," hollered Billy. Cory just sat there not knowing what to do.

Cory's team was up first and he got chosen to kick first. As he stepped up to the mark, Michael hollered, "Everyone move closer. He can't kick."

Cory watched very closely as the ball was moving towards him. He went to kick the first pitch and he kicked a little dribbler to the pitcher. He got thrown out at first, and everyone started laughing at him.

Michael saw what happened and yelled, "I told you he couldn't kick. My grandmother can kick better than that!"

Cory just walked back to the end of the line fighting back all the tears that just wanted to stream down his face.

"Oh, look at Cory, is he going to cry?" asked Dimitri.

Finally, Cory turned around and ran into the bathroom hiding his face so no one could see the tears streaming down his cheeks. He just sat there on the bench in tears.

Gym class ended and it was time for the kids to pack up and get ready

for home. Cory couldn't wait to get home, but his next worry was the bus ride home.

On the bus, he sat in the first seat hoping that no one would notice he was there. Nothing else was said that day, but as soon as he stepped off the bus, he started crying again as he was walking to his house. As soon as he walked in his mom could tell that the day wasn't any better than the one before. She grabbed him as he walked by and said, "Oh Honey, don't cry," while giving him a hug. Cory just couldn't hold back. He cried and cried for a few minutes while in his mom's arms.

"I don't want to go to school anymore. They're so mean to me. Please don't make me go, Mom," he screamed and hollered while crying in his mom's arms.

"Cory," his Mom said, "did you try and talk to them as I suggested?"

"No, why bother? They won't listen to me. They don't like me."

"Cory, I need to make an appointment with your teacher and the principal," his mother insisted.

"No, you can't do that Mom, I don't want to be known as a tattler. Please don't, Mom."

"Have you told your teacher about this?"

"No, I don't want her to know," insisted Cory.

"Well, something needs to be done. You can't be coming home like this everyday. This has to be settled once and for all."

Cory went to bed that night thinking about what they would do if they found out he told on them. They would probably beat him up, he thought.

Early Thursday morning, Cory woke up with an excruciating pain in his left leg. He screamed for his mother and father and they came running in asking what the matter was.

"My knee, my knee," he screamed while holding it with his hands. "There's something wrong with my knee," he said while bursting out in tears. "Please help me."

"Honey, we need to get him to the hospital quickly," his mother said in a panic.

"I'll get him dressed while you go wake Kristen up."

"Please move quickly," she begged.

While Cory's father was getting Kristen ready, Cory wasn't even able to put any pressure on his left leg. His parents had no idea what could be wrong with him.

They arrived at the hospital and Cory got taken right in. The doctors did X-rays and CAT scans on him to see what they could find. His family was able to visit him for only a few minutes while the doctors waited for the test results.

The doctors finally came out and told the parents that they couldn't find anything the first time so they were going to have to do more tests on him. Cory heard that news and just sat in bed crying, asking if it was going to be all right.

That Saturday the results came back, and the doctors had found something. They walked out to his parents pacing back and forth in the waiting room and told them to take a seat.

"We got the results back, and we found a lump in Cory's upper leg the size of a golf ball," replied the doctor.

"Oh no!" screamed his mother. "Please tell me he'll be all right. This can't be happening to my baby!"

"Mrs. Watts, it doesn't seem to be life threatening. It seems that fluid has been blocked and it formed a lump; but we are going to have to operate on him and keep a close watch on him. We're hoping that we'll be able to remove all of it," said the doctor.

Cory's mom sat there in tears with her husband rubbing her head.

"It's going to be OK, Honey," replied his dad.

They were allowed to go see Cory and tell him what was going on. They walked in crying and he was just sitting on his bed in hospital clothes.

"Baby," his Mom said while stroking his hair. "They got the tests back and they found a lump in your leg. You're going to have surgery Monday morning, but don't worry. It'll be all right, and your dad and I will be here the whole time with you."

"Oh no, I don't want to have surgery. Am I going to be all right? What's going to happen to me?" Cory screamed.

"Honey, everything will be all right," replied his dad.

The morning came and Cory went in for surgery. His mom and dad each gave him a big kiss before he left.

His mom had to call the school to inform them about what had been going on. Seeing that Cory had already missed one day, she had to call the principal. Mrs. Watts also asked his teacher to tell the children about it and why he hadn't been in school and that everything was going to be OK.

The teacher informed the children about what was going on and they

all seemed very concerned, even the bullies. There were a lot of questions asked about Cory, but none of them were answered until they found out more.

Once the surgery was over, the doctors came out and told Cory's parents that everything went just as they planned. They were able to remove all of the lump, but he was still going to have to stay in the hospital to watch out for infections.

His parents were allowed to visit and when they walked in, Cory was still asleep. He looked awfully tired. His mom and dad walked over to him and started to rub his head and talk to him while he lay sleeping.

"Cory, honey, wake up. It's your mom and dad."

"Wake up honey, the surgery is all over," his Dad said. "Everything went well."

Just as they were leaving to let him sleep, Cory came to.

"Mom! Dad! Where are you going? Please don't leave me," he cried. "I don't feel well."

"You'll be OK honey, just keep resting," suggested his Dad.

The doctors came in once again and informed them that Cory would be back in school in about two weeks.

The next few days while resting in his bed, Cory wondered if anybody from school cared about him. He had received a stack of get well cards from his classmates, but no visits.

Just as he was going to go for a walk around the hospital with his parents, Billy, Dimitri, and Michael came around the corner with their parents. Right then, Cory got very nervous and just froze. He thought they were there to pick on him. He didn't know what to expect. Cory walked back into his room while the kids' parents told them to follow him in and say what they had to say. Michael started to say something while Cory was getting back into bed.

"Cory, sorry for picking on you," said Michael.

"That's not it, Michael," his mom said in a stern voice.

"We want you to play with us when you get better." Cory sat there in shock not knowing what to do.

"Will you Cory, when you get better?" asked Dimitri.

"We want you to play with us at recess," suggested Billy. "We're really sorry for hurting your feelings."

"Are you sure you want me to play with you and that you really don't

hate me?" asked Cory still in disbelief.

"Yep, we're sure!" they replied.

"Cool," said Cory with a huge smile on his face.

"Hey Mom, they want me to play with them when I get better. Can I mom, can I?" he asked.

"Sure you can, honey, if that's what you want."

"Oh thanks, Mom. I knew things would get better."

While the children were talking, the parents got together and apologized to Cory's parents for their kids being so mean to Cory.

"One night after school, Billy came up to me before bed and said that he had to tell me something. When I asked what was wrong, he told me that he and his friends had been picking on Cory and now he was in the hospital and that they decided that they wanted to talk to him by themselves to apologize. So I called the other parents and they said the same things. Each child told their parents what they had been doing and how they felt bad. They admitted it to us because they felt guilty after what they heard what Cory was going through, and they wanted to come and apologize," said Billy's mom.

"Oh thank you so much. You don't know how much this means to Cory. We really appreciate it," replied his dad.

"Kids will be kids," replied Cory's mom, "but now we know everything will be better."

The parents just sat there and watched while their children decided on what they were going to play when Cory got out of the hospital.

– Leanne Tarkanian

Reaching My Goals and Achieving My Dream

It was my sophomore year at Bridgewater State College, and it was my worst year ever. I sought help and didn't find it right away, but I didn't give up. I faced the fact that I could have a learning disability. I had been having a very difficult time with my schoolwork and could not seem to find any help. I had struggled in grammar school and high school but had never looked into the problem. At Bridgewater, help was nowhere to be found. When I went to see my teachers, all they could say was, "study harder." My biggest problem was test taking. I could study for hours on end and still fail the test. Even tutoring didn't help. My roommates thought I was crazy because all I did was study, and then I would come back with an awful grade. After trying to track down teachers and going to tutoring sessions that were pointless, I gave up. I knew there had to be a reason behind all of those bad grades. I discussed the situation with my parents, and we decided to have some diagnostic testing done. That is when Curry College came into the picture.

Over my Christmas break, I had diagnostic testing done at three different locations, which was probably one of the hardest things I have ever had to go through. The process is long and very tedious. I thought I was only going to have one test done, but it turned out that three different doctors examined me. I was worried. I thought up the worse circumstances and soon became overwhelmed by the whole ordeal. Come to find out, I did indeed have a minor learning disability. The problem seemed to be that I could not retain information, and that explained the low-test scores. All that time, I thought I was stupid for failing those tests, but in actuality, there was a reason for it. I took the test results back to Bridgewater. I encountered a woman there who made me feel so low and so stupid that it made me want to leave the school that very day. This woman pointed out all of the negative things that I had thought about myself in the past. She said something to me that I will never forget. "Do you know how low these test scores are?" Of course I realized that they were low, but that was the reason I went to see her in the first place, to get help and not to be made a fool of. From that day on, I absolutely hated Bridgewater and could not wait for the semester to be over. During the semester, I got in touch with Donna Cataldo, who tested me at Curry. I explained to her what was going on and how I still couldn't get any support. Then she told me about the PAL program at Curry and all the support services here. It sounded good, so I decided to apply.

Transferring to Curry was one of the hardest decisions I have ever had to make. I had to say good-bye to the total freedom of living at school and hello to living under my parents' rules again. I decided to not live at Curry because my parents' house is only 10 minutes away. I had to say good-bye to all of my friends at Bridgewater and good-bye to many of my

credits that would not transfer. Yet leaving Bridgewater had many advantages: I could get more help at Curry, I didn't have to live with pigs any more, and I would be at home where I could focus my attention on my school work. I knew I needed to be at a place where I could get help if I needed it and to be at a place where I could achieve my goal of becoming a teacher. Before I knew it, I was set to start Curry in the fall of '99.

From the day I arrived at Curry, I loved it. Even though I didn't know a soul, I still knew this was the place for me. Something in the atmosphere made me feel welcome. Curry is a lot smaller than Bridgewater, and from the first day, I had teachers offering help. You don't have to hunt teachers down like I had to at Bridgewater. The professors here are the greatest and they will do all they can to help you. I started with the PAL program and got a great advisor, Andrea Baldi, who helped me excel in all of my classes. She helped me to learn new study habits, gave me some writing tips, and explained things really well. I went from having a 2.0 at Bridgewater to a 3.8 and the Dean's List at Curry. The PAL program is a great thing to have on a college campus. There are so many people to help you and there is always someone around. The only regret I have is not starting my college years at Curry. Even though my decision was a tough one, I feel I made an excellent choice.

If I had to give advice to someone in a similar position, I would say to be strong and don't be afraid to admit that you might have a learning disability. Go out and seek help; don't expect it to come to you. You should never let anyone tell you that you aren't good enough. Having a learning disability does not mean that you are stupid; it means that you have a different learning style and you process information in a different way. After all is said and done, I feel better about myself and even better about the decision I made to come to Curry College.

– Katie A. Connors

Too Young to Die

Every Thanksgiving my family and I travel to New Jersey to visit friends of the family, the Turtons. This Thanksgiving, my family and I were very thankful for the strong recovery of my ten-year-old cousin, Jessica. She had gone through a liver transplant earlier that month. For some strange reason, I knew that Thanksgiving of 1999 was going to be one to remember. I had this strange feeling in the pit of my stomach. It was not a pain; it was more of a quivering feeling, almost like when you know something is going to happen, but you just do not know what it is.

Thanksgiving was fine; the food, as always, was great, and of course, after eating, everyone was tired, so we all just drifted off to bed. However, I couldn't sleep. I wouldn't even be asleep for more than a half-hour when I would wake up. This continued for the rest of that night. It was that same weird feeling that kept me up. I thought maybe I was just hungry, but that obviously was not the case. The next day was going well; we were all sitting around the table after breakfast playing board games. We were all laughing and joking with one another about who was winning and who was losing when the telephone rang. It was my aunt calling. Right then, I knew that something was wrong. I knew my aunt wasn't calling to wish us a Happy Thanksgiving because she already had the day before. Everyone was sitting around waiting to see what she was calling for. The laughter and joking had stopped, making the house very silent. You could hear a pin drop. My mother went to the phone, and her voice was silent and scary. The expression on her face was one I will never be able to forget. Her eyes started to water and her mouth just dropped. Her coloring went from pale to white; like she had seen a ghost. All I kept saying to myself was, "Oh, God, not Jessica!"

"Mom, what's wrong?" I asked.

"That was your aunt. She was calling to let us know that Jessica passed away this morning." My heart dropped to the bottom of my stomach. I felt so empty, and as if it weren't real, even though I knew it was. I knew that Jessica had been sick, but it was hard to believe that she was dead. Well, this solved that weird feeling I had all night.

Jessica MacKinnon was my cousin on my father's side. I remember holding her in my arms when I was nine; she was just a baby, and all I kept thinking about was how beautiful she was. She was so little and perfect; a little angel. Jessica lived in Philadelphia, and this made it impossible to see her. I only saw her during family events such as weddings or special anniversaries.

Jessica had been diagnosed with leukemia almost a year and a half before she died. During the summer of 1999, she was doing fine; she was actually in remission. She was living her life to the fullest – going



This painting was a creative project done for Professor Young in her Introduction to Literary Types class. This portrays the difference between two characters in the play *The Stranger*. The play was about two young women, Mrs. X and Miss Y. Mrs. X is the character who thinks she is the stronger one; however, Miss Y is actually the stronger one. Mrs. X and Miss Y share the same base as being both human and female; however they both branch off into two different directions of inner feelings. Mrs. X is represented on the left and Miss Y on the right.

I hope you enjoy my creative project as much as I did in creating it.

Mrs. X

Water colors – because they are diluted and unclear like Mrs. X's feelings

Tree – branches are hanging low; sad and depressed, weak

Rain – tears of Mrs. X

Red – anger towards Miss Y

Green – stands for jealousy

Long strokes – symbolizes insecurity

Gray sky – despair over her life; disoriented

Lightning – broken, segmented

Gray clouds – hiding her feelings (in the beginning); blind

Miss Y

Oil pastels – clear like Miss Y

Bird – free from aggravation (she is her own person)

Flowers – bright and in bloom; self assured

Tree – healthy, stands upright, strong, sturdy

Clear blue sky – clear thoughts

Yellow sun – bright, in control (as the sun does over the universe) witty

Little green – maybe a little jealous of Mrs. X (she attempts to speak but catches herself)

I chose to split the paper because they are two different characters; however, they share a similar base (the tree); however each side is different and therefore represented through the same form as art (symbolizing everyone has feelings) but diverse appearances. People have always associated nature with feelings. Even in music videos and movies, if a person is sad, it is usually raining, if a person is happy, there could be a beautiful sunset.

– Margaret Fredericks

outside to the pool with her friends, going on family vacations – basically being an ordinary ten-year-old girl. Then in September of 1999, Jessica got really sick again; her parents rushed her into the hospital where she was diagnosed with liver failure. The doctors had given Jessica too much chemotherapy, which had killed her immune system, and she eventually got a virus. The virus that she ended up with started taking over her body, destroying it along with her liver. By this time, she needed a liver transplant or else she would die. She was in the hospital eight weeks until the hospital found her a liver donor. By this time, the doctors had only given her a couple of days to live. So because of this, her name went to the top of the donor list. They did find a liver for her, but the doctors were scared that her body would reject it because it was a liver from an adult.

The surgery took forever, but everything ended up going perfectly. She came out, and everything was fine. She was supposed to be in the hospital for another eight weeks to recover so that she wouldn't get any infections. The doctors were going to release Jessica in her fifth week because she was doing so well, that is, until she suddenly got sick again. Her blood pressure kept fluctuating, from high to low, and they had no idea what was wrong with her. A week or two had gone by when the doctors decided to do an EKG on her heart because they noticed something peculiar. Fungus had been growing on her heart, and this was causing her blood pressure to fluctuate. The fungus on her heart was not allowing the blood to flow normally. The doctors knew that they were not going to be able to go in and do another major surgery, because her little body wouldn't be able to handle it. They tried destroying the fungus with antibiotics, but that failed; and she ended up dying at nine o'clock in the morning on the day after Thanksgiving, the day she was supposed to be released.

I have always wondered why her parents didn't do anything to those doctors, such as bring them to court. As time has passed, I have come to realize that they want Jessica to be at peace. Bringing all this up again, they feel, would just make her roll over in her grave, because she would want her parents to be happy.

Before Jessica died, I wrote something; I don't know if one would call it a passage, a poem, a prayer, or something else:

"From time to time, people take life for granted until it is too late. A lot of people do not understand the value of their life or what Their life means to other people around them. In my case, I have A ten year old cousin who hasn't even had a chance to live life And may not even make it through the week because of liver failure. Now it is a couple of days later, and our prayers have been answered. They found a liver for her. The next step is surgery. The surgery Has come and gone, and she is going to make it. Thank God!!!

Even though I do not see her that much, I still love her very much and I am so excited that she is going to make it."

Jessica was courageous, beautiful, intelligent, caring, independent, and strong. I think of some of the things she will never be able to do such as drive a car, go to high school, and get a job. A lot of people take these things for granted, especially me. Jessica has had a big impact on my life; she has taught me not to take things for granted, to live my life to the fullest, and to have faith. Jessica might only have been ten years old, but she influenced a lot of people in a lot of different ways, and I feel that this is the biggest thing that she accomplished. I just hope that maybe one day I will touch people the way she did.

– Keri MacKinnon

Untitled

Happy, Grumpy, Sleepy, Sneezzy, Dopey, Bashful, Doc, Jane...Jane? In the dark ages of 1937, before political correctness began its march on society, Walt Disney and my doctors would have labeled me a dwarf. But it is now the new millennium, and terms, like the times, have changed. I'm no longer a dwarf; I've been diagnosed with shortness of stature. Or, if you don't go for that, you could say that I'm vertically challenged. Hey! These terms are getting to be longer than I am! I find it easier to go along with my friends and call myself a shrimp (with all due respect to small marine crustaceans).

I haven't always been a shrimp. Until I was nine years old, I was merely petite. I was 4'5" tall and relied on Mother Nature to ensure my continued steady, if somewhat slow, rate of growth. When I was ten, I was 4'5" tall...when I was eleven, I was 4'5" tall...when I was twelve, I was still 4'5" tall. Clearly Mother Nature was not doing her job. It was time for the wonders of modern medicine to step in.

And step in they did, in the form of a genetically engineered growth hormone: a safe, effective, and incredibly expensive synthetic protein. My doctors decided I could best combat my shortness of stature with daily injections of this liquid gold. Inject myself? Every day? Understandably, this was a prospect I did not relish, but inject myself I did – every morning for the next three years.

Today, it is seven years and four and a half hard-earned inches later. At just short of 4'10" , I am still considered a shrimp by most people. There are drawbacks to being small, obviously. It is frustrating trying to reach for something on a shelf that is too high for me. It is difficult to see over people's heads at the movie theater. I must buy my shoes at children's shoe stores. And there is no end to my annoyance when I sit in

most chairs and discover that my feet don't reach the floor.

But all of these are really minor things. Like the injections I so dreaded initially, being a shrimp isn't all bad. It can even be an asset. Have you ever been caught in a crowd, unable to move forward? It's frustrating, isn't it? Sometimes, because of my height (or lack thereof), I am able to squeeze through the smallest of openings. Sometimes it's good to get lost in the shuffle.

My height helped me at the kennel where I work exercising dogs. Some of the pets in my care were "fear-biters" – animals that attack when they feel threatened. Because I'm small, most of these dogs are less intimidated by me than by my taller coworkers. My size probably saved me from needing a tetanus shot on more than one occasion (poetic justice, I suppose, considering my medical history).

Every night when I go to sleep, I can curl up with my dog, my cat, and my stuffed tiger, and still have room for the books and clothes I was too tired to put away.

Being small has taught me valuable lessons. I used to be upset when I was the last person chosen for basketball and volleyball teams. But then I realized I was a hot commodity come baseball season because my strike zone is minuscule, making a pitcher's nightmare – guaranteeing a walk every time. Lesson Number One: To everything there is a season.

When I was very young, I defined "big" as anyone tall enough to reach the toaster and the can opener. I remember wishing on stars and birthday candles to be "big" too, so that I could make my own breakfast and feed my own pets. I reached my goal, but now realize that I set my sights too low. Lesson Number Two: You should reach for the stars, not the appliances.

In seventh grade gym class, every student is expected to run the 100-meter hurdles. I soon discovered that at 4'5" tall, I was never going to be able to jump over a 3'6" hurdle, no matter how many times I tried. Lesson Number Three: Sometimes you just have to find another way around.

But most importantly, I've learned that being small does not mean being insignificant. Often, the reverse is true. It could mean forever altering the face of the world's technology, like the silicon chip...or even the world itself, like Mother Theresa. Even very small things can make a very big difference. My destiny is in my own hands, regardless of how small they are.

– Jane M. Yannetti

What Will I Choose

What can I be when it's time for me
I'm confused on what to choose
Will it be easy, or will it be sleazy.
Will it be hard, will I leave my yard
The unknown awaits me.

When I am older, will I hold a boulder
or will it slide my shoulder
Do I have the will to win,
or will the will do me in.

Should I splash my brain, or leave it sane.
Waking up hurt, feeling in the dirt.
From the ground rise proud, wanting to be around
Exasperating thoughts
Masturbating my taunts.
What's next, how perplexed I am.

– Greg Covey

Untitled

I recently received recognition for saving a boy's life. This award means very much to me, and being able to see this boy run around the neighborhood like nothing ever happened brings a smile of happiness to my face. If you could have seen this boy the first time I met him, you would be amazed as well. Here's the story that made me look at life with a whole new view.

I'm an on-call firefighter in my hometown, Berkley, Massachusetts. It's about 50 minutes away from Boston, straight down Route 24. The population of my town is about 6,000 people, ranging from old-time farmers to new city folk wanting a taste of the country life. My town's fire department is a paid on-call department, which means we get paid per call. There are only two full-time EMTs (Emergency Medical Technicians) during the hours of 7:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday. Most of the time, we must come from our homes to the station, grab our gear, and jump into the fire trucks.

On Memorial Day, Berkley has a little service and a parade that begins at the Town Common. Most of the firefighters and EMTs were at the station washing and rinsing the apparatus to get it ready for the parade. Everyone at the station was in the kind of mood that you would see at a stand-up comedy show, very loose and joyful. Around 10:15 a.m., a call came in to dispatch that a 12 year-old boy had just been struck by a car on Burt Street while delivering his newspapers. When the dispatcher's

voice came over the radio, we knew it was bad because she sounded scared and her voice was trembling. I geared up, my station captain and I jumped in the engine, and three EMTs and a paramedic rolled the ambulance. It seemed like it took forever to get on scene, when in reality it took just 1 -1/2 minutes to get there.

When we pulled up, there was a car off in a nearby field, a mangled bike, and a boy lying in the middle of the road with blood everywhere. We immediately called for the bird (a helicopter from Boston) and started treating the boy. All I was thinking was that this kid was dead or was going to be a vegetable for the rest of his life. The EMTs had to begin CPR right away because the boy was not breathe. I helped the EMTs in getting whatever they needed out of the ambulance. When he started breathing again, the sound tore through my ears like nails on a chalkboard. He was gurgling because he had a punctured lung and it was filling up with fluid. Watching him try to breathe was very difficult. His chest was not making the regular up and down motion that we are used to; it looked like he was struggling. It was a rapid breathing pattern in, and a long sigh out. To this day I can still hear that sound, and it gives me goose bumps when I think about it. Because of the quickness and expertise of the rescue crew, we managed to bring him back to life and get him off to the hospital in minutes. This could not have happened as smoothly as it did if the rescue personnel hadn't worked as a team and cooperated as one. In all, the EMTs and paramedics were on scene for about four minutes. The rescue helicopter was waiting for them at the hospital and they were in Boston within 20 minutes of the initial call.

While everything is going on, you don't have time to think of what's going to happen to the patient or what the rest of his life is going to be like. It happens after the fact when you have time to sit down and actually look over this person's chances of survival. At that time, those chances were not good. It's weird. You've never met this person before, and if you saw him in a store, you wouldn't have a care in the world for him. What I mean is that you wouldn't care so much about their safety until their safety is in your hands. When you're in this field, you get an indescribable feeling. Your job is to save lives. You deal with difficult tasks and situations every day. When it's a child or a young person, it gets real tough to handle. You can't be thinking of that one little boy all the time. If you get caught up, you won't be able to do your job, but it was a kid and whenever there's a small child involved, it's always ten times harder.

The real tough part of the whole situation was having to wash the blood off of the road after the State Police Accident Reconstruction Team had finished their work. It was like watching a horror movie and seeing someone get killed in a pool or tub. The water turned to red and ran down into the nearby storm drain. Doing this was probably the hardest thing I've ever had to do because I knew that this blood was from a little boy

who might not be able to have his first girlfriend or walk across the stage to receive his junior high diploma. This is when I realized that life can be taken away whenever God wants it to be.

That first night I had trouble sleeping. I tossed and turned for hours, just thinking of the possibilities this child had. I actually cried and was miserable for days until we found out his prognosis. It was touch-and-go for a few days because he was in a coma and the doctors had to monitor the swelling in his brain. I finally found out the boy was going to be o.k. after his parents had called to let the department know. After many operations to fix broken bones in his leg, arm, and face and a few months of intense rehab, he was back in school in September with all of his friends.

It was also tough for many of the people on scene that day. One of the EMTs happened to be the kid's teacher, and later I found out that he lived about seven houses down the street from me. The teacher had many of her own problems to deal with. It hit her right off the bat because she was a lot closer to the boy than any of the others. Some of us, including myself, had to go to a critical-incident stress meeting to help cope with the tragedy. This meeting taught us how to deal with the mental and physical stress of the situation. It also showed us how to reduce our own stress. Until we found out he was going to be all right, everyone had a feeling of anticipation. We have our own separate lives. Often, talking to someone about an incident would help me deal with the stress, and trying to do things that would relax me, such as playing golf or going for a walk in the woods, would help, too. At the meeting, there were other firefighters from the area, and we got a chance to ask them how they dealt with major incidents.

After the boy came home and made a visit to the station, I had a good feeling inside my belly. I had done something good, and I knew it. We can't get choked up about one accident because there are always going to be other accidents or fires that we will have to deal with. We actually had a bad year this past year. There were a few deaths that the department had to deal with, but we managed to move on.

All-in-all, it makes me feel good about myself because I actually helped save a human being from dying. This is something that not everyone gets to do in his or her lifetime. There will always be some sort of obstacle and you just need to figure out how to overcome that obstacle and move on to the next one. For this one boy, his obstacle was the accident in which he almost lost his life. Now I just hope that everyone can appreciate his or her own life and understand that not everyone is going to get through life without struggle.

— John-Paul Benoit

Where are Wally and Chloe?

"Where are Wally and Chloe?" Jamie asked in distress as her eyes looked around the room in wonder. All the fifth graders in Mrs. Welch's class ran around the room in dismay, frantically looking for the missing bunny rabbits, the class pets.

"No need to worry boys and girls," Mrs. Welch proclaimed. "Wally and Chloe will show up sooner or later."

The children were not satisfied with the answer that Mrs. Welch gave them. Kevin, who was joined by Brandon, went next door to Mrs. Powers' classroom to ask that fifth grade class if they had seen the missing rabbits, but the answer from them was no as well. Kids were looking in desks, under desks, in the garbage can, in backpacks, everywhere! There was no sign of Wally or Chloe anywhere in Room 113.

Lacey, who was sitting next to Jamie, asked, "What if we never find the bunnies, Jamie?"

"I know we will Lacey," Jamie responded.

The children had been looking for Chloe and Wally now for about an hour, and they were beginning to give up hope. Their little fifth-grade hearts could not take the loss of their pets, Wally and Chloe. As the day grew older, there was still no sign of the missing bunnies. What were they going to do?

Mrs. Welch thought to herself, "What if they never turn up? On the other hand, what if Chloe and Wally were bunny-napped? What am I going to do?" Mrs. Welch was beside herself all day long. Nothing was accomplished throughout the whole day because all of the students were thinking about the safety and the whereabouts of both rabbits.

Just then, Jamie screamed in astonishment, "Oh my goodness! I just realized that the door to Wally and Chloe's cage is open. That is how they must have escaped! Now we have to look for them." Once the class realized how the missing bunnies had escaped, they were on a roll. They continued to look until the school day was over, but there was no sign of either of the bunnies.

At 8:00 a.m. the next day, a half an hour before school started, Mrs. Welch's entire fifth grade class was in Room 113 hoping that their missing pets might have returned over night; no such luck. The gloomy faces that Mrs. Welch saw when she walked in ten minutes later surprised her.

"What are all these frowns for? Don't worry, Wally and Chloe will return eventually. They wouldn't have disappeared."

Mrs. Welch tried to reassure her class, but she was unsure herself whether or not the missing rabbits were ever going to return. Throughout the afternoon, small items would mysteriously disappear. For instance, Billy's backpack and Michelle's lunch vanished from the room, and they were not to be found anywhere.

Mrs. Welch started to become suspicious. "I think that someone is taking these items. First it was our dear rabbits, and now it is a backpack and a lunch. We need to get to the bottom of this." The entire class agreed with their teacher and they decided to become detectives. Jamie and Kevin became the head detectives of the class.

The class was split up into two teams; Jamie and Kevin each took a team to start their work. Jamie took her team into a corner of the room and began to come up with a plan.

"Ok," she said, "Where should we start? Any suggestions?"

Michael raised his hand. "I know. Let's start near Chloe and Wally's cage and see if we can find any clues near that."

"Sounds like a plan to me," Luke agreed. "Me too!" the rest of the team said at the same time.

Jamie's team was off to the bunny cage. They found nothing, except for some wood shavings and some leftover food from the bunnies.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the classroom, Kevin's team was trying the same thing as Jamie's team; again nothing.

"What are we going to do, Mrs. Welch?" Sean asked.

"I don't know boys and girls. I think we are just going to have to look a little harder and become better detectives," Mrs. Welch answered.

Just then, Julie popped up in amazement. "Look everyone, I just found Billy's backpack out in the hallway."

"How did my backpack get out there?" Billy asked in bewilderment. No one knew how it had ended up in the hall.

"But we still don't know where Michelle's lunch is, and more importantly, where are Wally and Chloe?!" Jamie asked in wonder.

The class continued to look for the missing lunch and the missing bunnies. Mrs. Welch was relieved that the backpack had been found; however, what about Wally and Chloe?

As the day went on, as well as the search, few clues were uncovered, but nothing else disappeared.

During a math lesson, Rebecca said with excitement, "Guess what I

just found?"

The whole class yelled at once, "Did you find Wally or Chloe!?"

Rebecca answered, "No, I found Michelle's lunch, but there's no more food. All that's there is an empty brown paper bag."

"Oh," the class said in disappointment.

"I wonder what happened to all of the food?" Mrs. Welch asked the class. Although the lunch was found, there were still no bunnies in sight. One more day went on and still no sign of Wally or Chloe; what was Mrs. Welch's class going to do? Both teams had given up for the second day. Not enough schoolwork was being accomplished because everyone was distressed.

A half-eaten carrot was later discovered on the third day of the initial disappearance. Jamie and Kevin found it on their way inside from the first recess of the morning.

"This is a sign!" Jamie and Kevin both exclaimed at the same time.

"Chloe and Wally must be close," Mrs. Welch said as positively as she could, although she was not certain that the rabbits would ever be found. The carrot was found near the coat closet. The teams got together once again on a new day to see if any other discoveries could be made. Nothing on the third day either.

On the fourth day, when Mrs. Welch was about to give up, Bob, the janitor, came into their classroom.

The students were in a commotion and Bob wondered to himself, but out loud, "What in the world is going on in here, Mrs. Welch?"

"Well, Bob," Mrs. Welch began to explain, "Our class' pet bunnies, Wally and Chloe, have disappeared, and the entire class is upset." Bob looked at Mrs. Welch in shock.

"Oh no, Mrs. Welch, and boys and girls, I was cleaning your room a few days ago when I noticed that Chloe looked like she was in some pain and discomfort. I took her and Wally to the vet. Later, the vet told me that Chloe wasn't sick, she was pregnant and about to have baby bunnies."

The entire class was cheering. "Yeah! ! !" They exclaimed.

"I left you a note, Mrs. Welch, didn't you find it on your desk?" Bob asked. Mrs. Welch had the messiest desk out of all the teachers in the fifth grade.

"Well no, Bob, I didn't, but we all know how messy my desk is," Mrs. Welch said in embarrassment.

The entire class started to laugh and they all shook their heads in agreement; Mrs. Welch did have the messiest desk. Kevin and Jamie looked at each other and laughed. The entire class cheered in excitement to see the new bunnies, along with Chloe and Wally; no one could believe that Wally and Chloe had baby bunnies.

"Are you serious?! They really have babies?" Selena asked in amazement.

"I can't believe it!" Brandon said in astonishment.

"I guess that's why Chloe and Wally were acting so strange, they were anticipating the arrival of their children," Mrs. Welch said in Chloe and Wally's defense.

Now that the class understood where Wally and Chloe were and why they were acting like they were, they only wanted to see Wally, Chloe, and of course, the babies.

The children anxiously awaited the return of Wally, Chloe, and their family. Bob brought them down in a cage much bigger than before and one that was clean as a whistle!

"We are so glad you both returned to Mrs. Welch's fifth grade class, Room 113 ! You and your family look so happy all together." The entire class roared as Bob entered with Chloe and Wally and their kids.

No more missing bunnies in the fifth grade. Mrs. Welch's class had to decide what to do with four baby bunnies.

"Should we give them to loving families who want a pet rabbit?" Mrs. Welch asked.

Jamie answered, "I think we should interview families to find a new home for the babies."

"I think that before we do that, we should name them," suggested Kevin.

"Good idea, they are all good ideas," Mrs. Welch proclaimed. After a while of brainstorming, they came up with some wonderful names; Sammy, George, Maddie, and Libby. They ended the day with a long time of desk cleaning.

— Megan Wickham

The Conqueror

What do you want?

The conqueror wins the battle of the heart & soul
After you broke down the iron walls
And saw what you saw
Trust, pain, honesty & found passion
While destroying a woman.

What did you need or want?

Your conquest of this fortress
While leaving it in the rubble
Was it the battle you lusted?
It wasn't me.

You found and lost a woman
Once broken
Now changed
Into a goddess warrior

– Mercedes Munson



Honey's Nap

Erin Driscoll

Fur Angel

The Master sighed, looking down at the Earth. So many problems; so many people needing help. *Cody, will you come here, please, Little One?*

Cody flew along the corridor, then skidded to a stop outside the Master's room.

"Come in, Cody," the Master's deep, rich voice requested.

The door opened and Cody walked solemnly in to stand before the Master's chair. The little dog turned his face up toward the Master, waiting expectantly.

"You've expressed an interest in returning to the world below, haven't you, Little One?"

"You mean I really could?" the little dog yelped, looking directly into the Master's eyes.

"You really could."

The little Sheltie stood, trembling with excitement, staring up at the Master in disbelief.

"I could go back to my family?" Unable to contain himself any longer, Cody lost himself in a paroxysm of ecstatic barking.

"Cody? Control yourself, Little One!" the Master chided, a twinkle in his eyes at the little dog's enthusiasm. "It is possible for you to return to the world below, but certain conditions must be met. I cannot let you go back to your family, Little One. I am sorry."

"You... You can't?" Cody asked, deflated.

"But here's what I can do. I want to put you on assignment. I am going to place you with a new family, one that really needs a dog to take care of them. Does that sound like something that you'd like to do?"

"No contact with my family at all?" Cody asked in a small voice.

"Well, Little One, I'm not even certain that you will be in the same area. If you see them by chance, I would not be so cruel as to forbid contact, but do not seek them out."

* * *

Cody glanced at the huge white house with apprehension. His big, dark eyes fixed on the little boy sitting dejectedly on the steps. He looked so sad that the little dog's compassionate heart broke for him. Cody trotted up to the child, tail gently waving in greeting.

The little boy's eyes sparkled with greeting as the Sheltie padded up to

him. "Who do you belong to?" he asked. "You're sure a good looking dog, even though you are kinda dirty."

Dirty was an understatement! Cody had done his best to make himself look like a stray. The Master had told him that these people would be more likely to take him in if it looked like he had no place else to go. A judicious roll in the mud had left his thick sable and white coat caked with filth, and a run through a clump of sticker-bushes had added a liberal covering of burrs.

Cody whimpered, licking his lips and sniffing at the little boy's pockets.

"Are you hungry, dog?" the child asked.

Cody barked hopefully.

The little boy jumped to his feet, gave Cody a quick pat on the head, and ran into the house.

Cody sat on his haunches and thought about the case before him. Seven year-old Keith Winters had been having a lot of problems ever since his older brother, Matt, had been blinded in an accident. All of his parents' energy had to go toward helping Matt adjust, so Keith was feeling neglected. It seemed that every time he tried to help out, he did something wrong. He had begun acting out; getting in trouble at school, and deliberately misbehaving at home in an unconscious bid for attention. He needed someone whose first priority would be him, and the Master had thought that a canine companion would be just the solution.

"See, Mom? Here he is! Can we keep him?" Keith bounded back outside and knelt down beside Cody, throwing an arm across his back.

"He looks like he's been on his own for a long time...I don't know, Sweetie. I'm not so sure that a dog would be a good idea for us right now."

"Oh, pleeeeeease, Mom? I'll take good care of him, I promise! I'll walk him, and feed him, and brush him, and play with him, and I promise I'll keep him out of Matt's way!"

Cody tipped his head up toward Keith and gave him an affectionate lick on the cheek. Getting up, he paced solemnly over to Mrs. Winters. He whined pleadingly, then went up on his legs and licked her hand. Reflexively, her hand dropped to the dog's head and ruffled his ears. "You're a very good boy, aren't you?" she murmured softly. Looking back at her son, she smiled. "OK, he can stay. I know that you haven't had much to look forward to lately. Maybe this can work out."

"Yaaaaay!" Keith cried, and ran to throw his arms around Cody. Once released, Cody jumped to his feet and ran around in circles, barking excitedly.

"Hey! I wonder if I could teach him how to high-five?" Keith asked his mother. Cody barked once, then went up on his hind legs and "high-fived" the child.

"Looks like he beat you to it!" Mrs. Winters laughed. "C'mon, let's go inside and get him washed up before your dad and brother get back from Matt's checkup."

With that, Cody was brought into the house and unceremoniously picked up and lowered into a tub of warm water. The mud was shampooed out of his coat and the burrs were gently removed one by one. Finally, he was wrapped in a warm, fluffy towel and lifted out of the tub. Keith and Mrs. Winters then took turns brushing out and blow-drying the soaked dog's long, thick coat.

Stepping back to admire their handiwork, their eyes widened in unison. Clean and dry, Cody's sable coat picked up the afternoon sun to shimmer with countless redgold highlights. The white fur of his ruff, chest, forelegs, and lower hind legs had the cleanliness of the new-fallen snow, and his almond shaped eyes sparkled with good humor and affection.

"What are you going to call him, Keith?" asked Mrs. Winters. "He's a beauty, isn't he?"

"Let me think, Mommy." Keith's little-boy face screwed up with concentration. "I know! I'll call him Cal!" he said, naming his favorite baseball player, Cal Ripken Jr.

"OK, Cal it is. What do you say we go downtown and get Cal some new stuff?"

"Can't I stay here with him, Mommy? I don't want to leave him alone."

"We can take him with us, Sweetie. Pet supply stores let you take your dog right in with you. We just need to find a rope or something to put on him until we get him a leash."

Ten minutes later, the three of them tramped out to Mrs. Winters' car, a black Infiniti. Keith started to open the back door.

"Here, Sweetie; let me help you put Cal in the car." As soon as the words were out of her mouth, Cody sprang lightly onto the seat and turned to face the two humans, a self-satisfied look on his face.

"How much does this dog know?" exclaimed Mrs. Winters. And how could anyone have let him go? she thought to herself.

* * *

Cody sat on the back seat, staring out the window, deep in thought. He wondered what Matt was going to be like. He had received a little bit

of information from the Master, and what he had heard disturbed him deeply.

Sixteen-year-old Matt Winters had been a serious contender for a spot on the US Olympic Show Jumping team for the 2000 Games. Then, one rainy afternoon, his horse, Foxfire, had slipped trying to jump a five-foot fence, slamming his rider's head into the ground. Had Matt been wearing a helmet, his injuries wouldn't have been so serious, but the brash young rider had considered helmets and other safety equipment unnecessary.

Rushed to the hospital with a serious head injury, Matt had woken up completely blind. Until the swelling in his brain went down over the course of months or years, there was no way to know if the blindness was permanent. However, the general medical consensus was that it was.

Devastated by the loss of his sight, and of his Olympic dreams, Matt had withdrawn from his friends and family. Most of his days were spent alone in his room, lost in depression. His parents' time and energy were so taken up with trying to draw Matt out that they had little left for Keith. It was now Cody's job to try to help both brothers.

Cody came back to the present as the Infiniti pulled into the parking lot of the pet supply superstore. He jumped out of the car as the door was opened and obediently trotted at Keith's heels. As they entered, the part of Cody that was still a regular dog was assaulted by the sight and scents of the other dogs in the store. He looked to and fro at the huge displays and fought the urge to bark. Following his new humans, he went toward the dog supply section.

A half-hour later, they emerged from the store. Cody wore a new bright blue harness and leash, and Mrs. Winters pushed a shopping cart loaded with cans of dog food, a Sheltie-sized dog bed, food and water bowls, Nylarings, Gummabones, tug toys, rubber balls, and anything else a dog could want. In his free hand, Keith held a book all about Shetland Sheepdogs. He wanted to learn all that he could about his new pet.

Cody spied the new black BMW in the driveway the second they pulled up. The father and brother must have arrived back home.

"C'mon, Cal!" Keith cried. "Let's introduce you to everyone!"

"Honey, why don't you and Cal wait in the car while I go tell Daddy and Matt about him?" Mrs. Winters suggested.

"OK," Keith said, and crawled into the back seat to sling an arm across Cody's back and rub his silken ears. The little dog whined softly and snuggled close, licking the little boy's face.

* * *

Katie Winters walked into the sunlit kitchen to see her husband sitting, lost in thought, at the table. She walked up to him and slipped her arms around his shoulder.

"David, how did Matty's checkup go?"

"Still no change," he replied wearily. "The swelling seems to be going down, but as far as his eyesight goes..."

"How is he?"

"Depressed, even more so than usual. Has Keith been behaving himself today?"

"Um hmmm. We actually had a little bit of excitement here today."

"What happened?"

"A stray dog showed up in the yard, looking like he hasn't been taken care of in weeks. He was caked in mud and covered with burrs. Keith and I cleaned him up, and he's really a beautiful dog. Oh, David! He's the sweetest little guy and so smart! I uh...I told Keith we could keep him."

"You did what? Katie, we can't be worried about a dog underfoot right now! Not with Matt..."

"But, David! Try to look at it from Keith's perspective. This is the most interest I've seen him show in anything except for causing trouble since the accident."

"You said that this dog seems to be well trained?"

"Very well trained. He'll follow a command almost before it comes out of your mouth."

"Well, I suppose we could give him a chance." He grinned up at Katie, his blue eyes twinkling. "What kind of dog is he?"

"Oh, one of those miniature collies. I can't remember what the people at the pet supply store called him."

"You mean a Sheltie? I had one of those when I was growing up." David's eyes sparked with a sudden interest.

"He and Keith are waiting out in the car. I'll go tell them to come inside."

Katie walked quickly out to the car and opened the back door. "Sweetie, you and Cal can come inside the house now. I convinced Daddy to let him stay."

Keith and Cody bounded toward the front door, then stopped and waited for Katie to catch up with them.

"So, this is the new arrival!" David grinned, looking at the dog as Cody and Keith entered the kitchen. "He's a beauty, Keith, and purebred from the look of him. I wonder how he ended up on the streets? By the way, what's his name?"

"I named him Cal, after Cal Ripkin!"

David grinned again, touched at his son's enthusiasm. "What do you say that you and I bring Cal's stuff up to your room? We'll keep all of his things there; that way it won't be underfoot."

As father and son started unpacking Cody's new things, the Sheltie made a dive for the cans of Iams Lamb & Rice, and whined hopefully.

David laughed heartily. "Well, I guess we'd better feed him, huh Keith?"

David helped his son open the can, then looked on as he spooned the food into the shiny metal dog bowl. Cody pranced up to the bowl on flashing white paws and started gulping down the food. Finishing moments later, he turned and walked back to Keith, then curled up in a contented ball of fur at his feet.

"Looks like he knows whose dog he is!" David laughed, looking at the pair.

"Daddy?"

"What's the matter, Keith?"

"How did Matt's checkup go? Can he see now?"

"I'm afraid that Matt's checkup didn't go that well at all, son. There's been no change. Remember the swelling I told you about?"

"You mean the swelling that's making him not see?" Keith asked, thinking hard.

"Yeah," David said, kneeling down to look his son in the eye. "Well, the swelling is getting to be less and less, but Matty still isn't seeing anything. And he's pretty sad about that."

"Poor Matt," Keith said softly. "Maybe Cal can cheer him up!"

"We'll see. Matty's in his room right now, so how about you go throw that dog food can away and put the spoon in the dishwasher, then we'll go introduce them?"

"Sure!" Keith said, and walked down the stairs, Cody at his heels.

As Cody trotted after Keith, his plumed tail wagged in happiness and satisfaction. Already, the child's mood had shifted. He seemed happier, quicker to help out when asked than he had been. This looked like it was going to work. He had to find some way to report to the Master.

There is no need, a soft voice resounded in his head, stopping Cody in his tracks. *I see all*. Shaking off his astonishment, Cody trotted faster to catch up to Keith.

* * *

David and Keith stood outside Matt's bedroom door, Cody at their side. Rapping his knuckles lightly on the wooden door, David called out softly, "Matt? Are you awake, son?"

"I guess," came the quiet response.

"Is it alright if your brother and I come in?"

"I guess."

David slowly opened the door to reveal an impeccably neat room with trophies on the shelves and ribbons and posters on the walls. Cody looked around with keen interest. His last human had never kept her room this neat. It made sense when he thought about it. If Matt couldn't see anything, he would need to memorize where his things were.

Cody's gaze shifted to the figure huddled on the bed, back to the door. David walked up to Matt and laid a gentle hand on his shoulder. "Son?"

"What?" Matt mumbled.

"I'd like to introduce you to someone." As Matt flinched, David offered quick reassurance. "Not a person. A stray dog showed up in the yard, and we're letting Keith keep him. Come here, Cal," he said, turning toward the dog. Cody paced slowly up to the bed as Matt sat up and slowly, tentatively, reached out a hand. Rising up on his hind legs, Cody brought his head up to meet Matt's palm. A small smile played about his face, to be quickly overshadowed by a look of sadness. "This...this is the first time I've touched an animal since..." His sightless eyes shone brightly with unshed tears. Cody scrambled onto the bed, snuggling even closer to Matt, who wrapped his arms around him in turn and finally gave in to the tears that he had been holding inside himself for far too long. David and Keith tiptoed quietly out of the room, leaving Cody and Matt alone together.

* * *

Cody bounced excitedly up and down on the end of his lead, his dancing paws flashing as his inquisitive black nose sniffed every which way. Barking excitedly, he leapt up off all four paws to swipe Keith's face with his tongue, then spun in circles, chasing his tail. Suddenly, he stopped midspin, almond eyes widening, and tested the wind, catching a long-forgotten scent. Was it...her? Yes! Straining at the lead, pulling with all his might, he dragged Keith toward the slowly approaching young

woman on the other side of the street.

"I'm sorry!" Keith gasped, as his normally well-mannered dog launched himself headlong at the stranger, crooning low in his throat and nuzzling frantically. The woman smiled and dropped to her knees.

"Don't worry," she answered softly. "I'd never turn away the attentions of a Sheltie." She stroked the dog's silken ears, a sad look coming to her face. "I lost my Sheltie a couple of years ago. Yours looks a lot like him. What's his name?"

"This is Cal," Keith smiled proudly. As the two launched into animated conversation, Cody looked at the young woman in confusion. Didn't she recognize him? Had it been that long? He pressed closer to her, thinking desperately at her. *It's me! It's me! Can't you see me? I love you; I want to come home!*

Little One. The Master's voice sounded gently in his mind. *She sees you, and remembers, and keeps you always in her heart, but her time with you has passed.*

Abruptly, the young woman stood, with one last caress to Cody's ears. "He's lucky he found you, Keith. It's not easy to win a Sheltie's heart." She smiled once more, and walked away.

"Wow, Cal! Do you know that lady used to have a dog like you? Her dog was so special that she rescues Shelties who have bad owners and makes sure they get good homes. And she said it looks like I'm taking good care of you!" Keith dropped down and wrapped his arms around Cody. "I'm so glad I found you. I'll always take good care of you," he murmured softly.

Looking up into the child's trusting, soulful gaze, then at the fading figure over his shoulder, a strange feeling came over the little dog. It was a feeling of security, a feeling of home and love. A feeling he'd known before, and a feeling he could keep in this new life as well. For the first time in many a while, Cody relaxed completely, happy and content in his new master's arms.

— Jane M. Yannetti

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to the following people for their help with this publication. Without their advice, guidance, and senses of humor, this edition would never have become a reality. This edition is dedicated, with gratitude, to Paula Cabral, Maryann Gallant, Janice Hill, and Sandy Kaye.

Grateful acknowledgment to Jennifer Miles, Director of Student Activities, and Michael Harriman, SGA president, for their support.

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